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### ***IDOC News Release***

#### **Governor discusses IDOC transformation and criminal justice reforms**

*Nearly 13,000 Corrections staff receives mental health training in less than 12 months  
Reforms rehabilitate inmates more effectively while improving safety for corrections officers*



SPRINGFIELD – December 14, 2016 - Governor Bruce Rauner today joined Illinois Department of Corrections Director John Baldwin to highlight efforts the administration has made to transform the Department of Corrections (DOC) along with other criminal justice reforms. The governor pointed out nearly 13,000 security, non-security and contract DOC staff have participated in a two-day *Mental Illness 101 – See the Person not the Illness* training session in 2016 with almost 100 percent compliance.

“Criminal justice reform has been a top priority of our administration from the very beginning, which is why the progress we've seen at the Department of Corrections is so encouraging,” said Governor Rauner. “Through the hard work and dedication of Department of Corrections staff, we are closer every day to reaching our goal of safely reducing Illinois’ prison population by 25 percent before 2025.”



In Illinois, roughly 27 percent of DOC's population is on the mental health caseload. DOC has partnered with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to provide corrections officers with mental health training. To date, nearly 13,000 members of IDOC’s staff has received two days of focused mental health training. The course provides lessons on conditions such as schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder, helps staff understand the effects of psychotropic medications, gives staff tools to recognize when someone is in distress and offers suggestions on how to better

communicate with them.

“We are committed to reforming Illinois’ criminal justice system and this mental health training is an important step in that transformation,” said IDOC Director John Baldwin. “The training gives our staff a glimpse of what offenders with mental illness are experiencing and provides strategic methods on how to better communicate with them. We will continue to invest in our staff so they can be safe and successful on the job, while also working to better assist and rehabilitate our mentally ill offenders. We will continue to work towards improving outcomes for all offenders, giving them a real chance to get a job and take care of their families when they go home.”

One of the administration’s first acts was to establish the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform to examine our current criminal justice and sentencing policies, practices, and resource allocation in Illinois. The bipartisan commission presented an initial 14 recommendations to the governor last Spring.

Under Governor Rauner’s leadership, DOC has already started to implement a number of the commission’s suggested reforms administratively, while two bills have passed the General Assembly with bipartisan support. Governor Rauner previously signed a bill into law that requires judges to explain why an incarceration sentence is appropriate for a low-level felony offender when they have no prior probation sentences or no prior convictions for a violent crime.

The governor has signed other common sense bills including one to allow former offenders to have the chance to become licensed health care workers, and another to help youth by bringing Illinois in line with other states by reducing mandatory minimum lengths of probation and treating low level offenses with treatment.

In May, DOC entered into a Settlement Agreement in the case of Rasha v. Baldwin. The agreement requires the department to hire additional mental health staff, provide increased staff training, bring four residential treatment units online, offer an inpatient treatment program, improve programming for mentally ill offenders, and ensure they are not disciplined because of their illness. The case had lingered in the courts since 2007 and it was the Rauner Administration that took action to ensure better treatment for offenders, while improving the safety of our corrections officers.

Prior to January 2016, staff had not received any training on how to work with offenders who are mentally ill.